

The Staatsballett Berlin can offer several "Nikias" and "Gamzattis" for "La Bayadère". But you are the only soloist who embodies both roles. How come?

That's not clear to me either. I can only assume that Johannes Öhman, our ballet director, thought I am more suitable for the one role, while Alexei Ratmansky entrusted me with the other, so I ended up learning both so they could choose.

And so it happens that you have, so to speak, two souls in your chest - which in and of itself is nothing out of the ordinary in ballet, after all, more or less all the ballerinas embody Odette and Odile in "Swan Lake". And now and then one sees the one dancer in one performance as Giselle, in the other as Myrtha. Nevertheless, the question: How do you cope?

First of all, it's just a pleasure to be able to interpret both parts. But it actually makes you understand deeper the by looking at it from different positions. The acting has always been important to me in ballet, so was really looking to explore both characters down to the last detail in order to make the motives of their actions plausible to the public.

In which order did you learn the parts: one after the other or at the same time?

We do not have that many performances of "La Bayadère" this season, so I was not supposed to perform Gamsatti until the next season. So while I was working on both roles at the same time, I primarily concentrated on the Nikia, but also studied the role of the Gamsatti.

## But then you suddenly stood on the stage of the Staatsoper Unter den Linden as Gamzatti. You had to step in?

A last-minute cast, if you like.

# Originally you were supposed to debut as "Nikia" in "La Bayadère", and you worked this role above all with Alexei Ratmansky. How did he teach you the character of the role?

He drew our attention to many aspects of ballet, highlighting all the characters and the way they communicate with each other. So it was clear what he wanted. But beyond this specifications, he still left enough room to develop our own interpretive accents.

## A difficult job? After all, Alexei Ratmansky wanted to come as close as possible to the choreographic original by Marius Petipa, as it has been preserved in the records.

A difficult job, as far as the purely technique was concerned. The dance technique has changed since the 19<sup>th</sup> century premiere and developed. But this "Bayadère" was supposed to convey an idea of what the premiere might have looked like, and that meant learning a different tradition and technique, as it manifests itself in the notations.

### Was that a problem for you to interpret familiar role of Nikia in a different production and steps?

No. The work process was intensive and without time pressure. The rehearsal felt more like I was learning a new ballet - I didn't hold to what I know about the role, and started from the beginning. Only the experience remained.

#### It was a white sheet on which the choreography could emerge?

You could say that. It is important to me to really understand what choreographer wants and correspond to their ideas the best I can. And that is why it is absolutely necessary to get rid of the memories from other productions.

# A challenge was certainly the pantomime part of the ballet. Pantomime, that was for Petipa, that is also for Ratmansky, a formal canon, structured as well as the choreography.

It's a different way of expressing myself, and at the same time a challenge that is always exciting for me. Mime for me is a form that is far from simple and therefore must be absolutely accurate, if it is to be understood by the public. You can not hide behind a movement or rely on a music effect. Mime is pure expression, and that has to be very precise.

#### You did not feel cramped?

No. It felt more like learning another language and another way to communicate. In "Giselle" it is only the mother who communicates by pantomime. In other ballets, the mime is limited to two or three gestures. In La Bayadère, however, a whole story is told through them and therefore has a very different quality.

#### Which role do you prefer, the Nikia or the Gamsatti?

Nikia was the bigger challenge for me, as her character is less straighforward. Gamsatti knows what she wants. She wants the man. She wants Solor. She wants him at any price, even if it is the death of her rival. Nikia is more about dignity and it makes her decisions a bit more complicated... Nikia is not attracted to the riches. But she is a dreamer, she dreams about love and Solor, but at times she even doubts his honest intentions of Solor ... but at the same time she gives in to her dreams and when her hopes are crushed she chooses to die.

I always ask myself what makes a character complex and beautiful, so I always look for the depth - whether it's Nikia or Gamsatti. Ultimately, that does not make a difference to me. I give myself to a role completely.

You distrust the smooth surface, an outward beauty. You always look for something positive, even if a character seems so negative at first glance. And vice versa.

Yes. La Bayadere offers two very different characters, yet both are beautiful women that Solor cannot say NO to. There must be a reason why. And finding the beauty and reasons for actions in both of these roles was very special process for me.

### **Questions from Hartmut Regitz**

On February 2nd, Ksenia Ovsyanick will again be seen as Nikia, the Tatiana in Cranko's "Onegin" will dance on March  $21^{st}$ ,  $29^{th}$  and  $31^{st}$  and on April  $6^{th}$ , Cranko's "Romeo and Juliet" will be on the  $11^{th}$  and  $30^{th}$  of June planned.

